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# SUCCESS STORY

## Info Center for the Disabled Opens

**Woman creates space where community can find new opportunities**



Photo: Resource Ctr/Hojamurad Byashimov

Community activist Olga Byashimova conducts a training on computers for disabled people at a resource center she helped establish in Turkmenistan.

***A USAID-sponsored study tour inspires a Turkmen community activist to open an Internet resource center for the disabled and their families in her town.***

Since returning from a visit to the United States, Olga Byashimova has been putting her new skills and experience in community activism to use.

Olga opened an informational resource center for the disabled in her hometown of Turkmenbashi, an idea that came to her during her three-week USAID-supported study visit in the United States. While interacting with colleagues there and visiting numerous community organizations, she began developing an action plan that would allow her to reach out to this underserved community in Turkmenistan.

Olga began working with the disabled in 1998 and was well aware of the absence of opportunities and services for the disabled in her area. Upon returning from the study tour, she set out to apply her new skills and experience. Together with her colleagues, Olga identified that technology and education were the top services desired by the disabled and their families in her town. She and her colleagues received a grant and arranged with a local organization that works with disabled people to support the center's efforts.

The resource center is operated by volunteers who help the disabled and their family members to work with computers and research various information. The volunteers also organize trainings for small groups of participants on information and communication technologies using the center's computers and other equipment. In addition to the trainings, Olga and her colleagues organize social events, discussions, and roundtables to inform the public about issues related to the disabled.

Olga is happy that the skills she gained during the study tour in the United States have helped bring better opportunities for residents of her town. "Our world was created for everybody regardless of abilities, social status, and income," she said.

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